

Barsa (region)

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Barsa, **Barsā**, **Barka**, **Barkō**, **Barkena** (among many other variants depending on the era and language), or **Byrsagê** as it was known in ancient times, is a vast region located south of the [Old Continent](#)—more specifically between the [Far South](#) and the [Far East](#)—regarded as one of the oldest continuously inhabited lands of the known world.

It is surpassed only by [Hannu](#) in terms of continuous human civilization, although Barsa surpasses it in having been continuously inhabited by sentient beings in general.

Often described as a cradle of civilization, it has served as the home of countless nations, tribes, and kingdoms across the ages. Its immense diversity fueled cultural and scientific achievements—even surpassing those of [Melukka](#). However, much like Melukka, this also bred centuries of rivalries and unending conflict among its peoples.

To most Nordlings—at least until [Fabio Sachs](#)’ expedition to the Far East in the late 13th century—Barsa remained a land

Barsa



Information	
Variation(s)	Barsā, Barka, Barkō, Barkena (among many other variants depending on the era and language), or Byrsagê as it was known in ancient times
Type	(vast) region
Country	Varied
Region	Between the Far South and the Far East of the Old Continent

of enigma and half-myth, its reputation shaped by the tales of travelers, sailors, and beyond-the-seas merchants. However, despite being one of the least common foreign presences in its ports, Barsameni people still left a subtle but certain mark in Nordling lands before Sachs obtained more information about the region.

For the Nilfgaardians, however, Barsa was far more familiar. Some of its territories were even seized from the Barsamen across history, and the region was long known under another name: the *Southern Kingdoms* (not to be confused with the Nordling use of the same term for pre-conquest non-Nordling states beyond [Ebbing](#), such as [Gemmeria](#)). A term born of the sheer number of states that divide the land, and a reminder of the fractured yet vibrant political mosaic that defined it.

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History

Ancient Times

Fossil records indicate that the land of Barsa was once far greener than it is today. Over the millennia, however, the region underwent a steady process of desertification, driven by several geological shifts—the most significant being the lowering of sea levels.

Only those territories that once bordered, or still border, Nilfgaard retain remnants of that ancient verdancy, preserved in pockets of fertile land amid the arid expanse.

Scholars speculate that a similar process may have unfolded across the seas in other southern regions, such as Hannu, parts of [Ofir](#), and the lands of Nayar, pointing to a broader climatic and geological transformation that shaped much of the southern Old Continent.

Ancient Antiquity

At some point during this period, the ruins of Iramc, also known as [Darizag](#) in

more recent sources, were believed to have been inhabited by the oannun, making them the possible first settlers of the region. However, given the wider difficulty of identifying the original inhabitants of Barsa mentioned later, this remains uncertain, since it is impossible to establish exact dates for many of the ruins discovered.

What is known is that the ruins once stood submerged in a lake. This situates their construction either in the pre-desertification era, when Barsa was still greener, or during its earliest stages of arid transformation.

Early Antiquity

It is difficult to identify with certainty the original inhabitants of Barsa. The study of ruins scattered across the region suggests the presence of dwarves, gnomes, elves, and possibly other, now-unknown races. However, the precise dates of these constructions remain lost to history.

Extensive archaeological excavations conducted by Nilfgaardian scholars have uncovered hieroglyphs depicting green-bearded dwarves cultivating the land. According to Professor Schliemann, this may support the hypothesis that Barsa was once the homeland of the poleviks, before their migration northward. Such a migration was likely driven by the long-term desertification of Barsa, compounded by later conflicts with the Aen Nílfe elves, who gradually forced them farther north.

In time, these displaced peoples reached the Northern Kingdoms, where they attempted to rejoin their dwarven cousins. Instead, isolation and hardship led them to devolve into what Nordling folklore distorted as “*malformed creatures*”—the “*nasty buggers*” said to roam unclothed and lure the innocent astray. These tales were likely exaggerated depictions of the tribal societies the poleviks established in the North. A few, however, were assimilated into human societies; one well-known case recalls a polevik who became an actor in Oxenfurt’s drama society.

Elven Era (400s B.R – 770s A.R.)

At some point after the poleviks migrated northward, once the famed Golden Empire of the [Aen Nílfe](#) had been established, its reach began to expand. In time, its armies and settlers arrived in Barsa, then still undergoing the long process of desertification. There, they founded colonies in the form of fortified cities,

incorporating vast swathes of the region into their dominion.

Although Barsa contributed little in wealth or resources compared to other provinces, its incorporation proved strategically vital. The cities established in Barsa became staging grounds for expeditions into Ofir and beyond, enabling the Golden Empire to extend its reach as far south as [Zangvebar](#) at its height.

Today, the Aen Nílfe legacy in Barsa survives only in scattered ruins. The city-states that emerged in the wake of the empire's collapse were eventually destroyed, absorbed, or rebuilt and expanded by human rulers. With its elven survivors scattered through the Barsamen desert and later beyond, these remnants eventually formed the backbone of the Aen Fasache or [Aen Manche](#)—the “Desert” or “Ashamed People”—who took refuge in the perilous expanses of the Korath, far to the north, beyond Barsa's natural borders.

One notable exception is Zerzura, the White City in the eastern reaches of Barsa. Once a proud elven foundation, later a city-state and eventually a taifa, Zerzura endured repeated wars only to return again as a city-state under human hands, preserving more of its original structure than any other. It remains the exception that proves the rule of Barsa being “*mostly divided into numerous small states known as taifas.*”

The Arrival of Humans (230s B.R.)

With the First Conjunction of the Spheres, humans first appeared in the world. Some of the earliest groups found themselves in the land of Barsa.

Confused and disoriented, these newcomers were swiftly subjugated by the fledgling Aen Nílfe Empire, founded scarcely a decade earlier. The elves enslaved them, employing humans for many purposes—above all as subjects of entertainment and as raw material for experiments aimed at “*perfecting*” the elven race in the hope of one day regaining Gannéadan, the lost Eden from which the Aen Undod had been forced to depart. Goblinoid slaves carried out most menial labor, leaving humans for the roles that most directly served elven ambition and cruelty.

This period of enslavement, much as would later occur in Zangvebar but on an even greater scale, fused the disparate ethnic groups of humanity that appeared in Barsa into a single emergent people. They became known as the Mukhtalitun (Barsameni Common: *the mixed or the mixed ones*), regarded as the common ancestors of the later varied Barsameni peoples. Out of this crucible of suffering arose two

messianic liberators: the Altawayimu, the Twins.

Their historicity is generally accepted, though their deeds have been deeply mythologized across the centuries. According to Barsamen traditions, the Altawayimu led uprisings, shattered chains, and sowed the first seeds of freedom. In truth, their actions indirectly laid the foundations for the later rise of the taifas—the small, fractious states that would come to define Barsa's political landscape for millennia.

The Foundation of the Sultanate of Badyah (4th Century A.R.)

During the 4th century, refugees fleeing the enslavement imposed by the Aen Nílfe elves arrived at the coast of what is now Ofir, where they would found the Sultanate of Badyah, the first organized state in the region.

Although the exact relationship is uncertain, it is believed that the Bayadi may have been a splinter group from the ancestors of one of the later free slave tribes, the Bahharis. This theory is based on the phonetic similarities between Bayadi and Bahhari and between their respective homelands, Badyah and Bahhar.

However, Badyah did not last long. By the end of the century, it fell and was absorbed by the Malliqdom of Misraq, later known as Ophir, and eventually Ofir. Its downfall was largely due to the technological superiority of Misraq, which allowed them to overwhelm the copper weapons of the Bayadi. There are also rumors that the Aen Nílfe may have indirectly contributed by teaching advanced techniques, possibly as a form of revenge.

After that, Ophir became the first of several states to bear that name in the region of the Far South, before Ofir was eventually fully unified.

The Fall of the Golden Empire and the Rise of the Twin Faith (780s A.R. — 860s A.R.)

By the late 8th century, the situation in Barsa began to change dramatically. Two forces converged: the decline of the Aen Nílfe Golden Empire—already weakened by the loss of Zangvebar in the 770s—and the rise of a new religion that would forever alter the region's identity.

According to Barsamen tradition(s), the turning point came with the arrival of a priestess from Hannu, exiled from her homeland. Seeking refuge among the

nomadic tribes of escaped slaves wandering Barsa's deserts, she claimed to have experienced a divine epiphany and carried within her womb the legendary Altawayimu, the Twins long prophesied in the syncretic slave lore that had blended many faiths under elven oppression. She became known as the She-Prophet, founder of a new monolatrist creed that elevated her god to supreme status above all others.

The Twins themselves—whether historical figures, mythologized amalgams of countless slave-heroes, or something in between—remain the subject of fierce debate. What is not disputed is their impact. Once grown, their charisma and leadership united the scattered nomads into a formidable host. Their professed mission was to liberate Barsa from the elven yoke, but chroniclers often suggest a deeper ambition: to seize the land for themselves and establish a theocracy dedicated to spreading their mother's "*true faith*" across the world.

What followed was remembered as a jihad—a holy war. The details differ from taifa to taifa, each shaping the memory to fit its own theology, yet all agree on the outcome: the Golden Empire withdrew. Its Barsa colonies were abandoned, left to the vengeance of the newly freed Barsamen. Only Zerzura, the White City, endured as a visible fragment of the elven legacy, later "*humanized*" yet never entirely stripped of its origins.

The triumph, however, sowed the seeds of discord. After the She-Prophet's death, the Divine Brother committed the atrocity of sexually assaulting the Divine Sister. The act tore the faithful apart. Some clung to the Brother, justifying his crime as a divine trial sent by the Supreme God to assure that he was the true leader of the Barsamen, while others rallied to the Sister, whose branch would later absorb matriarchal influences from the distant [Zerrikania](#) through its merchants. Yet because of the sacred mission of the Twins and the momentum of the new faith, the Brother's punishment was postponed, transformed into a path of "*redemption through deeds*." The land remained nominally united, though divided in practice: the Brother ruled in the west, the Sister in the east. The Hakimun (judges), originally convened to pass judgment on the Brother, became permanent arbiters of power, and from their title Hakim emerged the style of many taifa rulers that followed.

Another enduring legacy of this period was linguistic. The She-Prophet's teachings, spread through camps and tribes, gave birth to the Barsamen Common tongue: a hybrid language forged from slave creoles, shaped by Hannuan grammar, and elevated as the unifying speech of Barsa—even as faith

itself fractured.

When the Twins eventually died, each half of Barsa was ruled by a council of Hakimun: the westerners favoring the Brother's legacy despite his crime, the easterners loyal to the Sister. But stability never came. Councils rewrote verdicts, altered scriptures, and bent the Prophet's words to suit their own visions. Soon blood was spilled not only over the long-postponed verdict of the Brother's crime, but also over the meaning of the Prophet's revelations, over which god—or gods, since many still clung to polytheism or henotheism despite the unifying creed as they saw The Divine Twins in their own, unique ways—was supreme, and over which interpretation of the “*true mandate*” should prevail.

Thus began the endless cycle: split upon split, conflict upon conflict. From these fractures emerged new ethnic groups, divergent theologies, and the taifas themselves—small, rival states, each claiming to be the sole heir of the liberation faith, and each ready to spill blood to prove it.

Some scholars suggest that this outward expansion left traces beyond Barsa. The monotheistic religion of the Mücevherli in Ofir is thought by many to be either a direct continuation of the Twin Faith—spread during the era when Barsa stood united under the Twins' mission—or a derivative creed shaped by contact with Barsamen merchants, missionaries and warriors.

The Drying of the Suchak Valley (860s–1030s A.R.)

During the same era, the western valley of the Korath Desert—known as the Suchak—collapsed as a habitable region. Once one of the few areas of the desert capable of sustaining life thanks to the river of the same name, it dried up as average temperatures rose by nearly three degrees. What had been an arid but viable environment became unsustainable almost overnight.

The catastrophe triggered waves of migration from the valley. At that time it was inhabited by humans later known as the Suchaki, a mix of various ethnic groups composed of nomadic tribes roaming the valley and sedentary communities living in a Neolithic mode of subsistence. Forced to abandon their homeland, they followed the course of the dwindling river southward in search of still-flowing waters. Inevitably, many of them crossed into the interior of Barsa, which by then was already struggling with the sea invasions from Ofir.

There, they were absorbed by different taifas, mingling with Barsamen populations and giving rise to still more ethnic branches in the region's already

complex tapestry.

In the Korath itself, the drying of the Suchak left behind an even harsher emptiness. By the end of the process, only Nilfgaardian patrols in the west, Zerrikanian patrols in the east, outlaw nomads, highly adapted human enclaves, the desert elves, lesser lifeforms such as some plants, along with insects, small reptiles and the monsters of the First Conjunction remained—cementing the desert's reputation as the Frying Pan of the Old Continent.

The Pirate Taifa Era (860s – 1030s A.R.)

The rise of the taifas, despite fragmenting Barsa politically, opened the region to greater contact with the outside world. Until then, foreign connections had been limited either by the dictates of Aen Nílfe dominion or by the commands of the Divine Twins. With the taifa system, however, formal ties began to emerge with a still-ununified Ofir, Hannu, Nilfgaard, parts of Melukka, and even distant Zangvebar. This marked the beginning of Barsa's history of external commerce.

Yet trade also brought less noble influences. Among the most disruptive were a federation of Ofieri coastal tribes, themselves displaced by rival groups after the collapse of northern Oshan into the sea. Allied with Zangvebarian pirates and Hannuan mercenaries, they launched wave after wave of raids across the Barsamen coast. This period became known as the Pirate Taifas Era, when these outsiders seized control of much of Barsa's shoreline.

At first, they acted as a unified force. But as time passed, they too fell victim to the curse of Barsa and Melukka: endless division. Rivalries fractured their federation, and survival forced them to ally with the very locals they had subjugated. Gradually, shared struggles blurred the line between invader and native. Cultures merged, communities intermarried, and out of this syncretism arose several of the ethnic groups that define Barsa to this day.

The emergence of these new coastal states also provoked major shifts inland. Displaced Barsamen communities fled into the scarcely inhabited lands of [Ruach](#) (modern Nilfgaard), where they intermingled with Magnese, Vicovarian, and Nilfgaardian settlers. From this mingling was born the Ruache people, a hybrid group that carried Barsamen blood and traditions northward into the territory of the empire-to-be.

The Melukkani Influence in the East (860s–1160s A.R.)

From the late 9th century until the 1030s in most of Barsa—and as late as the 1160s in the eastern regions—the land endured one of its most turbulent eras. Beset on nearly all sides save the north and west, the taifas faced constant external pressures, largely due to Barsa's key geographic position.

To the waves of migrants from the Suchak and the maritime invasions from Ofir, the east now added another threat: the expansionism of Melukka. Two of its imperial powers, Dukkar and Khodû, seized the opportunity presented by the weakness of the eastern taifas and incorporated many of them into their domains.

This began a period of Dukkarization and Khodûization that lasted for nearly three centuries, reshaping the ethnic, cultural, and social landscape of eastern Barsa and further diversifying the already complex mosaic of the region. In time, however, the costs of maintaining these provinces proved too burdensome. The conquered taifas were gradually transformed into autonomous client or vassal states, serving as buffer zones between Melukka and the rest of Barsa.

The only exception to this fate was [Zerzura](#), the White City, which preserved its independence by acting as a mediator and neutral ground to resolve disputes between Dukkar and Khodû without bloodshed. This role allowed Zerzura not only to maintain its way of life but also to profit from both empires, earning wealth and prestige as a trusted neutral territory.

The Brief Expansion of Western Barsa and the Almost-End of an Empire Unborn (1030s–1060s A.R.)

Despite the disunity of the taifas and the repeated invasions they suffered—in truth, largely because of them—the influence of the Barsameni and their descendants (namely, the Ruache people) spread as far as [Rowan](#). Some even served as mercenaries under the Chiarni Republic. This, however, only added to the instability of the region, setting the stage for another convulsive era when, in the 1030s, the Kingdom of Daerlan invaded Ruach and later most of the western taifas, launching a campaign of expulsion and enslavement against their Barsamen inhabitants.

Alarmed by Daerlan's rising power, the Republic of Nilfgaard appointed its first Imperator to crush the kingdom. After victory was secured, the Nilfgaardian Senate declared that the Barsameni deserved their homeland restored—and so prepared for invasion.

By the late 1040s, Nilfgaardian troops aided the Barsameni in reclaiming large swathes of territory and reestablishing their rule. Yet the Republic's motivations were not purely altruistic; increased control over Barsa promised greater opportunity for Nilfgaardian commerce and influence. For some of the more radical Barsameni, this "*protectorate-like*" arrangement was no better than the occupations of Ofir, Hannu, and Zangvebar done in the coast of their taifas, or the enslavement they had endured under both the Aen Nílfe and later Daerlan. Resentment soon turned to rebellion.

In the early 1050s, a coalition of taifas formed the Unification of Sadat, named for its leading taifa. Emboldened by zeal, its leaders sought not only to reunify Barsa but to expand its dominion beyond as the Divine Twins once intended. Their uprising seized control of former western Barsameni lands and even threatened nearby Nilfgaardian territories, bringing the Republic to the brink of collapse.

What followed were a series of brutal wars. Nordlings, only vaguely aware of the conflicts, described them as battles against "*rulers of unknown kingdoms at the other end of the world.*" Nilfgaard, meanwhile, called the first stage The Reconquest and the second and last, The Barrier. These wars ultimately resulted in the permanent absorption of several regions once inhabited by the Barsameni, which over time became fully Nilfgaardian.

The name Unification of Sadat would later echo far away: in the North, a small group of mages led by [Finn Thordvison](#) appropriated it as a codename for their secret society aimed at breaking from the Supreme Council.

By the 1060s, during the end of these wars, the capital and taifa of Bukhala was conquered. Its fall forced waves of Barsamen refugees to flee, some traveling as far as the shores of Cidarís to seek safety. Most of them, however, ended up settling in Ebbing.

Later chroniclers note that the Nilfgaardian experience with Western Barsa became a key point in the political rise of Torres var Emreis. In his famous plea to the Senate, demanding "*temporary special powers*," Torres reportedly cited the near-catastrophe caused by the Unification of Sadat as the ultimate proof of the Republic's inability to survive in the long term. The Senate, persuaded—or deceived—by this example, granted his request, setting in motion the birth of the Nilfgaardian Empire.

Contact between Barsa and Naphakadeizwe (Early 12th century

A.R.)

By the beginning of the century, technological development allowed the merchant ships of the deep Far South nation of Naphakadeizwe to reach as far as Barsa, more specifically the central taifas. They established trade relations with them as regularly as certain “*Beyond the Seas*” merchants did in Nordling lands.

This led to the adoption, among many of the ethnic groups of Naphakadeizwe, of loose-fitting clothing styles, particularly due to garments imported from Barsa.

Additionally, they left a physical legacy in that region, as some of their ships—while capable of making the journey there—were unable to return. This added further layers to the vast, and complex territory.

As a result, some central Barsa populations—particularly those with tawny skin tones—are believed to descend from these merchants and local inhabitants. This is supported by certain genetic traits that mixed, diluted and persisted and subtle cultural elements showing syncretic influences reminiscent of Naphakadeizwe traditions

The Currency Wars (1263–1272 A.R.)

During the same period in which the Northern Wars were taking place, Eastern Barsa experienced its own problem, a set of conflicts known as the Currency Wars.

These began when the theocracy of Zaia and its western neighbors in the eastern region refused to accept a new regional currency promoted by the taifa of Ja’far and its eastern allies.

The opposition argued that the composition of the new currency would undermine the competitiveness of their economies. However, they were effectively forced to adopt it, as rival taifas banned the use of Zaian and allied currencies within their territories. This economic pressure escalated into open conflict.

The war was not only military but also economic warfare the different taifas attempted to cripple each other’s economies and each side sought to impose a currency that favored their own interests.

After nine years of conflict, the war reached a stalemate no clear winner and all parties economically devastated. This led to a preventive peace agreement along

with the call for an international observer to avoid further bloodshed and reach a final resolution. During negotiations, Ofir proposed that the taifas temporarily integrate into its gözets system while they recovered. All parties accepted.

This effectively led to a partial third unification of Barsa, at least within that eastern subregion.

The Influence of Hannu (1263–1280s A.R.)

Taking advantage of its strong position as the second major power of the Far South, just behind Ofir, and drawing on historical precedent—specifically that between the 860s and 1030s the Pirate Taifas Era had been partly driven by Hannuan mercenaries—Hannu sought to reconnect with coastal taifas that had once been founded, at least in part, by its people.

Although Hannu did not achieve the same level of influence and presence in the region as powers like the Nilfgaardian Empire and Ofir—largely due to the long time that had passed since the Pirate Taifas Era—it still managed to secure a degree of soft influence.

Many of these coastal states began to view Hannu more favorably and, to some extent, fall within its sphere of influence. Even if this influence remained weaker compared to the dominant regional powers.

The Visit to Eastern Barsa of Fabio Sachs' Expedition to the Far East (1283 A.R.)

In the late 13th century, the Temerian explorer Fabio Sachs, leading his famed expedition in search of the “*mythical kingdoms*” long spoken of by foreign merchants to Nordlings, passed through the more or less unified through the gözets system, subregion of Eastern Barsa. While en route, his company secured a commercial treaty with several of the already mentioned gözets of the region—taifas that fell somewhere between protectorates and independent states, their sovereignty tempered by the growing sphere of influence of the unified Ofieri state.

This achievement was not without resistance: Independent but Nilfgaardian-backed agents, seeking to destabilize the area and extend imperial influence beyond the western frontier into all of Barsa's fragmented politics, stirred unrest. Yet Sachs and his companions navigated these difficulties, winning the favor of

local rulers and formalizing new lines of exchange through a commercial treaty.

Though their stay was brief, Sachs dedicated himself to a remarkably thorough ethnographic survey. His observations were later compiled into his magnum opus, *Chronicles of the Far East*. Across its many volumes, the work dispelled enigmas, false theories, and misconceptions surrounding Barsa and other distant lands. It also described territories unknown to Nordlings until then, replacing myth, legend, and rumor with the first detailed Nordling accounts of both familiar and newly revealed regions of the world.

Sachs' expedition also had lasting political and cultural consequences. Since it was representing the kingdom of Lyria and Rivia, Sachs returned not only with knowledge but with new diplomatic and commercial ties. For a time—between 1284 and the 1350s—the Lyrian-Rivian crown became a minor yet notable external influence in Eastern Barsa —In that sense, paving the way for the Nordling Colonial Era in the [Western Continent](#) with [Fabiola](#)—, alongside Hannu, Ofir, and Melukka. This relationship fostered early exchanges that some historians now describe as the beginnings of a limited “*globalization*”: more Nordlings of all professions, but especially merchants, traveled south to Barsa, while Barsameni merchants, envoys, and pilgrims journeyed north in return.

The bonds reached as far as dynastic marriage. Records confirm that at least one Barsameni consort entered the royal household of Lyria and Rivia, a development that scandalized conservative circles within both realms. Some scholars even argue this controversy was among of the many seeds that later culminated in the civil war known as the War of Regrets and the ultimate dissolution of the Lyrian-Rivian Confederation into multiple smaller states, sometime after the Haaki Invasion of 1350 and the economic crisis that followed in its wake.

Contemporary Situation

The fragmentation into taifas gradually eroded Barsa's influence over its neighbors. In the present day, the land remains divided along external spheres of influence: Nilfgaard-backed taifas dominate the west, while those aligned with united Ofir and Hannu hold sway across the central and eastern regions. In the far east, Melukkan states act as a third player, exerting influence over nearby taifas due to sheer proximity.

Although most Barsamen desire only a peaceful life, the reality of politics and

faith ensures recurring outbreaks of conflict. Skirmishes and wars flare from time to time, with both sides suffering losses, perpetuating the cycle of rivalry that has defined the region since the fall of the Golden Empire.

Climate

Barsa is immense, and therefore it is impossible to define a single, unified climate. In the west, in the few areas that remain somewhat green, the climate is similar to that of the southern parts of the Nilfgaardian Empire. Across the majority of Barsa, several climate types can be found hot arid desert climate, subtropical arid climate, tropical arid climate, oceanic desert climate and even pockets of subtropical and tropical climates in the limited greener areas beyond the west.

Coat of Arms

Because of its perpetual fragmentation, Barsa as a whole has never possessed a unified coat of arms. The closest the region ever came to such a symbol was during the era of the Divine Twins.

Their emblem was a circular shield, edged in gold, its field a deep red. At its center coiled a bicephalous black cobra, blood dripping from its fangs.

The gold border is commonly thought to represent the will to spread the “true faith” beyond Barsa’s borders, while the red signified the blood of enemies shed in the holy war. The cobra itself—beyond the obvious association with the Twins—remains more ambiguous. Each taifa has since ascribed its own meaning to that fragment of the coat of arms: some saw it as a guardian, others as a sign of divine wrath, and still others as a reminder of the betrayal that split the original faith.

Culture

Each taifa in Barsa is a world of its own. Centuries of conflict and fragmentation have produced a mosaic of cultures that, while they share a distant common root, have diverged so much that today each stands as a distinct identity.

Architecture

Architecture in Barsa is varied, depending on the taifa. However, several common features can be identified. The use of light colors to reflect heat, domed roofs and curved or bulging walls. Both the roofs and walls adopt these shapes to allow air to circulate inside buildings, keeping them cool during the hottest days while also preventing that cool air from escaping.

Age of Majority

The age of majority varies not only from taifa to taifa, but also from person to person.

It is typically recognized when an individual shows the first signs of adolescence. However, beyond the biological evidence, what counts as such signs depends heavily on each nation and even specific territories within those nations.

Contrary to what Nordling stereotypes may suggest adult–young marriages are not common. They occur only rarely, mainly among the ruling class. What is far more common is marriage between young individuals already considered adults, based on their visible signs of adolescence.

Alcoholic Beverages

Despite what Nordling stereotypes may suggest about Barsa, alcohol is permitted.

However, it is allowed only under the principle of moderation. What is truly forbidden is the loss of control caused by intoxication, although the exact definition of “*loss of control*” varies from taifa to taifa.

The most popular beverages across the taifas are fermented drinks made from pitaya, sometimes alone and sometimes mixed with other fruits. This is largely because the plant is highly resistant to extreme heat, making it ideal for the region and the pitaya was introduced from the Sundalaic Islands after early contact and quickly became widespread.

The most successful of these beverages is the harshafiyya (*the scaly one*). It is named after the fruit’s scale-like appearance and the mistaken belief that liquid is extracted from these “*scales*” (which is not actually the case).

Art

Art and artistic preferences in Barsa are as varied as the taifas themselves. What can be identified are a few broad patterns.

In western taifas, a strong influence from the Nilfgaardian Empire, while in eastern taifas, influence from neighboring countries of Melukka.

In coastal taifas, music tends to be the most valued art form, near-coastal (but not fully inland) painting and literature dominate, while in deep inland taifas, sculpture prevails. This is largely due to how resources are distributed.

However, across all taifas, religion is a very prominent theme (though not the only one).

Contraceptive Methods

These vary depending on the taifa and its social structure (matriarchal or patriarchal).

In matriarchal taifas contraception is typically achieved through alchemy, using preparations that eliminate already developed spermatozoa and in patriarchal taifas methods rely on herbal treatments that induce hormonal changes, causing the zygote to behave like an unfertilized ovum and thus triggering a new menstruation.

Clothing and Style

Clothing across Barsa reflects the climate. Light colors—particularly white, light brown, pale blue, and similar tones—are favored by both peasants and nobility, as they help reflect the sun's heat. Loose, wide garments are typical, not elongated but cut to allow airflow and ventilation. From the eastern taifas, trade with Núchtetl and the land of Nayar introduced the poncho, which became especially popular as protection during the cold desert nights or in the early hours of the morning.

Another widespread garment is the alghilaf (Barsamen Common: *Cover*), a cloth that drapes over the head and shoulders, shielding both from the sun's relentless glare. It resembles the turbans and head-shawls of Ofir, yet is distinctive in its fuller coverage of the upper body. Despite Nordling accounts portraying it as exclusively feminine, the alghilaf is worn by both men and women—particularly in the sun-scorched central and eastern taifas—where it is prized as much for practicality as for modesty.

Other tales, however, are little more than exaggerations—such as the claim that

Barsamen men universally wear long beards. In reality, desert life makes such beards impractical, as they cause excessive sweating and harbor bacteria. Most Barsamen men are either clean-shaven or wear only short moustaches, a detail often overlooked in Nordling retellings. A particular case of this practice was seen in the Barsamen mage Tadrus Hen Llosa, who despite being raised in the North—having arrived as a refugee from Bukhala at the age of three—remained clean-shaven throughout his life. Hengforsian chroniclers speculated that this habit derived from a very early memory of his father, and it stood out all the more since most Nordling mages typically wore at least a short beard.

Common Elements

Nevertheless, certain traits recur across the region. Chief among them are the strongly patriarchal—or, in some cases, matriarchal—social structures that dominate Barsamen societies. These systems are often explained as adaptations to the harsh demands of desert life as well religion, though matriarchal traditions were also shaped by long-standing commercial exchanges with Zerrikanian caravans.

So ingrained are these gendered hierarchies that they became known even in the faraway Northern Realms. One oft-repeated custom is the expectation that Barsamen women preserve their virginity until marriage. While Nordling tales exaggerate the severity of this practice, it does hold true in many taifas, where it is framed less as moral law and more as a marker of honor and familial reputation.

Currency

Barsa does not possess a single unified currency, for obvious reasons.

The closest thing to this is a set of strong regional currencies used across the three main zones Western Barsa, Central Barsa and Eastern Barsa.

These currencies are classified according to their utility and function.

For example, in the west the Nilfgaardian floren is used as the primary currency for international trade, due to its global value, the currencies of

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the strongest taifas are used for medium and small regional transactions and for local and daily purchases, smaller coins are used, either issued by the dominant local taifa or jointly created by neighboring taifas to avoid conflicts such cooperation emerged after events like the Currency Wars in Eastern Barsa.

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Each coin features unique materials and designs, but they all share one defining trait none of them have a reverse side. The reverse is intentionally left blank for religious reasons.

One of the most widespread coins was the ayn (*eye or essence*), originally from the taifa of Bukhala. Even after its conquest by Nilfgaard, the ayn continued to circulate in Western Barsa as a regional currency.

Daily Life

Daily life also varies greatly from taifa to taifa and depends heavily on geographic location.

The only consistent pattern observed is related to meal times. Breakfast is usually eaten late, lunch takes place at a moderate time (neither too early nor too late) and dinner is typically eaten relatively early.

Education

Education in Barsa varies depending on the taifa, making it impossible to describe a single, unified system. However, there are two common factors it is controlled by religious institutions and, depending on the region, it is exclusive to either men or women.

Entertainment

Though forms of entertainment vary widely from taifa to taifa, one element recurs across Barsa: a marked anti-erotic and anti-sexual character, rooted in the legacy of the Divine Twins—particularly the crime committed by the Divine Brother. This event left a lasting imprint on Barsamen cultural memory, shaping norms around modesty, propriety, and the rejection of sensual display.

Contrary to Nordling clichés, there is no such tradition as the so-called “*belly dance*” in Barsamen lands. That custom belongs to Ofir, not Barsa.

This same cultural memory also contributed to the widespread adoption of the

alghilaf. While in the desert it served the practical function of shielding from sun and sand, its religious and social weight grew from the belief that modesty was the barrier against repeating the sins of the Brother. Thus, the alghilaf became not merely clothing but a symbol of collective morality—worn by men and women alike, especially in the harsher taifas where the Twins’ faith retained greater influence.

As in many other parts of the world, prostitution is outlawed throughout Barsa, regarded in every taifa as an indecent and dishonorable practice. Whether patriarchal or matriarchal, both systems share the same stance: selling sexual services is deemed degrading for women and men alike, while those who purchase them are condemned as corrupters, guilty of committing a crime likened to that of the Divine Brother.

Barsamen strictness, however, surpasses that of most other regions. Its suppression of prostitution is described as extreme. The tale of the “*divine punishment*” said to have befallen the taifa of Alfūj is frequently invoked as a cautionary example of what happens when such practices are allowed to spread unchecked.

Yet in practice, the trade endures in secrecy. Hidden from public view, prostitution continues to exist in many taifas, serving a pragmatic function for rulers who exploit it as a tool for espionage, extracting information from rivals through covert liaisons.

Funerary Customs

Funerary practices vary from taifa to taifa.

However, some recurring methods across the region include cremation and burial at sea.

In taifas with stronger Hannuan influence, mummification is also practiced.

Language

In Barsa, a curious phenomenon occurs: it is commonly said that a single shared language exists—the so-called Barsameni Common Language—but this is not actually the case.

What truly exists is a family of languages derived from that original common tongue, which formed and consolidated between the late 8th and late 9th

centuries After the Resurrection. Following the fragmentation of Barsa into multiple taifas, combined with isolation, migrations, the passage of time and other sociocultural factors, this common language evolved into a language family over the following centuries: the Barsameni family.

It is often perceived as a single language, but this is misleading. The supposed “*dialects*” only share 20% to 45% mutual intelligibility.

In addition to the Barsameni family, the region includes local minority languages, languages introduced through migration, regional creoles, commercial creoles and pidgins and in border regions Melukkan languages in the east (near Melukka) and [Nilfgaardian](#) along the frontier with the Nilfgaardian Empire.

Laws

Although the laws—and the ways in which they are created—are unique to each taifa, they share two common purposes. To reinforce religious dogmas and prevent them from being broken or to fill the gaps within those religious dogmas, as well as the gaps created by those gaps themselves. In the theokritocracies for example, laws are the building blocks of those religious dogmas.

Weapons Laws

Weapons laws vary greatly from one taifa to another. However, a common pattern can be observed Only those who enforce the law or travel between taifas are typically allowed to carry weapons for purposes of defense or the use of force.

That said, weapons may also be carried by civilians in certain contexts. Those engaging in sporting or training practices provided the weapons are not sharpened. Although what is considered “*sharpened*” varies from taifa to taifa.

Men’s and Women’s Rights and Sexual Minorities

Rights vary significantly from one taifa to another.

In patriarchal taifas, men are favored, in matriarchal taifas, women are favored.

Regarding sexual minorities, the situation is equally variable. In some taifas they suffer persecution, and in others conditional acceptance, typically limited to

either men or women depending on the cultural context.

What does not exist, however, is a middle ground or true equality.

Marriage

Another common thread across all taifas is the age of marriage. In Barsamen societies, it typically occurs at an early stage of life, usually between the ages of twelve and sixteen, with slight variations depending on whether the community in question follows a patriarchal or matriarchal order.

Contrary to many Nordling assumptions, however, these unions are not primarily arranged. Most marriages in Barsa—outside of the noble and ruling families—are based on personal choice and affection. Arranged marriages do occur, but far less frequently than outsiders might expect, and almost exclusively within the aristocracy. Even in those cases, alliances are usually forged between families already bound by long-standing ties of trust and familiarity. The political or economic benefits are often treated as secondary to whether the match is seen as harmonious.

This early age of marriage is also explained by practical considerations. Harsh desert life, coupled with historically high infant mortality rates, encouraged earlier reproduction to ensure family survival. As a result, Barsamen societies placed less emphasis on delaying unions, seeing them instead as a natural stage of life reached quickly once physical maturity was attained.

Magic

Unlike in Zerrikania, where magical academies exist alongside priestesses who openly practice sorcery, Barsa has no formal institutions for the study of magic. The reason lies in its theology: the Divine Twins are widely believed to have been born powerful Sources, their gifts inherited from the She-Prophet supposed “*divine*” pregnancy.

This belief shaped Barsamen attitudes toward magic. Every child born a Source is seen as marked, touched by the same power that once dwelled in the Twins. In many taifas, such children are regarded as distant heirs of the Twins, and their fate is inevitably bound to the priesthood. Because of the theocratic structure of Barsamen society, they are almost always destined for the clergy, where they are elevated to high ranks after a long period of instruction under elder priests—often those who were once Sources themselves. Their innate affinity for magic is

interpreted as proof of divine blessing.

Among these gifted few, the most powerful Sources—especially those who show the greatest devotion to their priestly duties—may rise to positions of governance. Their authority is justified as a direct extension of the Twins’ legacy, lending divine legitimacy to the ruling order.

In some taifas, however, the path differs. Rather than ascend to governance directly, powerful Sources are instead incorporated into the ruling dynasty through marriage or entry into the harem. By blending their “*blessed blood*” with that of the reigning house, the dynasty reinforces its claim to rule, further bolstering the aura of divine mandate that underpins political power in Barsa.

Mentality

It is impossible to define a single shared mentality—or even a set of dominant mentalities—across Barsa due to its complexity.

What can be identified, however, are a few common elements. More specifically, two.

The first is a deep and pervasive religiosity, which shapes many aspects of daily life.

Each taifa is, in itself, a very different world from the others—much like the different lands of Ofir and the countries of Melukka—but religion remains a core defining force across the region.

The second is the strong influence of neighboring mentalities in border areas.

To the east, influence from Melukkan cultures, to the west, influence from the Nilfgaardian Empire and in the center and parts of the east influence from Ofir.

This last case occurs despite the separation by sea, due to historical and geopolitical reasons.

Since some of the westernmost eastern taifas of Barsa are considered gözets of Ofir—a political category between a protectorate and an independent state, essentially countries within the Ofieri sphere of influence.

Mental Health

Despite its strong religiosity, Barsa is not a backward region in matters of mental health. In fact, it could be considered one of the most advanced regions in the

world in this field.

This progress is largely driven by faith itself, as Barsameni believe that understanding the mind can help them better comprehend the divine, and therefore existence as a whole.

However, this progress comes with significant drawbacks since all advancements are deeply intertwined with religion, this leads to slow progress, as established methods are often repeated without question making change to typically occurs only in severe or extreme cases.

Religion

Barsamen faith is a mosaic of religions, most of them monotheistic or henotheistic, with a few polytheistic traditions that trace their roots back to the original Twin Faith. Each taifa preserves its own creed, doctrines, and rites, shaped by centuries of separation and reinterpretation. Yet beneath their differences, they share recurring symbols, narratives, and liturgical elements that betray their common ancestry in what was once a single, unifying faith.

Slavery

Slavery exists in Barsa and is one of its main exports. It remains a widespread institution throughout the region due to being deeply rooted in the legacy of the Divine Twins. During their era, enslavement was embraced both as vengeance against the Aen Nílfé and as a practical means of preserving Barsamen lives in the unforgiving desert.

The severity of slavery varies from taifa to taifa, but one principle is universal: no honorable member of the taifa may be enslaved. Instead, slavery is reserved for criminals, “*infidels*” or enemies, and, in some cases, foreigners who have gravely offended local customs.

Beyond internal use, slavery also functions as a pillar of international commerce. Many taifas turned to the trade as a way of disposing of criminals or unwanted captives from rival taifas. Nilfgaard and several Melukkan states are key buyers as well as sellers. In times of hardship, Barsamen taifas likewise purchased slaves from abroad to replenish labor forces depleted by famine, disease, or war.

Over generations, this practice further diversified Barsa’s population. Since many rulers and elites took male or female slaves as consorts, making them the fathers

or mothers of their children.

However, the status and perception of slavery vary enormously from one taifa to another.

In some cases, it is treated as a purely commercial activity.

In others, it is seen more as a form of punishment as mentioned earlier—a way of removing the most undesirable elements of society to purify it.

As with most things in Barsa, slavery is underpinned by a strong religious justification.

Stereotypes

Abroad, there are not many stereotypes about Barsa. This is mainly because they vary greatly depending on the interaction with one taifa or another.

Additionally, there are two overarching traits of the region that make the formation of broad regional stereotypes nearly impossible—except in nearby areas. Barsameni are generally highly ethnocentric and xenophobic toward one another. Because of this, when they are abroad, regional stereotypes rarely form, as there is no unified identity to project outward.

In that sense, they could be described as having a temperament similar to that of the Nordlings, but slightly more intense.

Unique Professions

In Barsa, there are no mages, druids, or [witchers](#) as such (with the exception of the occasional past visit from witchers of the School of the Manticore). Instead, all roles related to those functions are absorbed into the priesthood.

As a result, their roles in other societies are fulfilled by Haris al-Iman (guardians, caretakers, protectors, or sentinels of the faith), Ra'i al-Iman (shepherds, caretakers, or stewards of the faith), and Hami al-Aqida (protectors or defenders of doctrine). These respectively replace the roles typically covered by mages, druids, and witchers in Barsa.

The Hami al-Aqida are essentially warrior-priests. More specifically, they can be described as a hybrid between a priest, cleric, pellar, paladin and a witcher. They stand out for their ability to use miracles in a more intentional way, while still preserving their non-intentional nature (since otherwise, they would cease to be

miracles).

Demonyms

Barsamen: masculine singular (sometimes used neutrally as a generic), Barsawoman: feminine singular and Barsameni: neutral plural, also used adjectivally (e.g., Barsameni cultures, Barsameni languages).

Economy

Much like Mahakam, the various taifas of Barsa operate within a system of centralized economies. However, Barsamen practice is markedly more liberal, as private property exists, albeit under state oversight within flexible parameters.

The region's primary export is slaves, followed by mineral resources and various local goods—particularly in the coastal taifas, where maritime trade is strongest. Among its mineral exports are copper, iron, and tin, which remain staples of regional industry, as well as gold, lapis, and other precious stones mined in the Barraye and Istama Mountains. Salt, quarried from both desert flats and coastal deposits, has long been a cornerstone of Barsamen trade, valued as much for preservation as for ritual uses.

Imports, by contrast, encompass nearly everything required for Barsamen life. Of particular importance are beasts of burden essential to survival in desert conditions, such as horses—ancestors of many modern local breeds—and dromedaries, both of which remain vital to transportation and trade.

Barsa's principal trade partners include Nilfgaard, Ofir, Hannu, and Melukka. To a lesser extent, commerce also extends to [Skepimos](#), [Zangvebar](#), the [Sundalaic Islands](#), the [Gubakuni Archipelago](#), and even certain coastal kingdoms of the Northern Realms.

Demographics

Barsa has a low population density, of approximately 3 inhabitants per km².

Its total population is also relatively low compared to other regions, largely due to its desert climate, reaching only around 7 million people across the entire region when all taifas are combined. This is one of the main reasons why foreign

powers have historically held so much influence in the region.

Of these 7 million inhabitants around 90% are Barsameni, belonging to approximately 60 different ethnic groups, The remaining 10% are foreigners, including Nilfgaardianized Barsameni (especially from the former taifa of Bukhala), Ofiri, Melukkan peoples (mainly in the east), Hannuans, Skepimians, Nayarites (including Tetlec), and very small minorities such as occasional travelers from Nordling lands or Zangvebar.

People

As with Melukka and Ofir, it is impossible to define an “average” Barsameni, even if the region is not as diverse as those territories.

This is due to both the history of the region and its vast size, resulting in a population that includes people of virtually all physical types, body shapes, hairstyles and heights.

Western populations tend to resemble Nilfgaardians and even some southern Nordlings. Many are characterized by skin tones ranging from fair with a slight olive hue to swarthy, along with slightly elven features such as high cheekbones, and unusual eye and hair colors for humans. Notably, for example, hair instead of appearing purely black, may appear black with blue opalescent tones.

Central populations tend to display tones between desert and tawny, also featuring uncommon eye and hair colors within human norms.

Eastern populations are typically found in tones between sandalwood and chestnut, with a predominance of darker eye and hair colors, largely due to the historical presence of neighboring states from Melukka.

Further east still, due to proximity to the region of [Bia Thin](#), features such as various types of epicanthic folds can appear, often mixed with all of the above traits.

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The name Barsa is widely believed to be of foreign origin, derived from the Scholar's Tongue word *Byrsa* (hide or skin). According to one tradition, the term was first applied by traders of the ancient [Imperium](#) (not to be confused with Nilfgaardian Empire, which did not yet exist) who arrived during the time of the Twins' jihad. Witnessing the cruelty of the holy war, they were struck by tales of enemies being flayed alive. They called the land *Byrsagê* (Land of Skins), a name that over centuries shifted through corruption: *Byrsag* → *Bursag* → *Borsag* → *Borsa* → *Barsa*. Barsamen lore holds that the Twins themselves adopted the foreign term in their proclamations, deliberately using it to inspire fear among outsiders and to spread their mother's faith more effectively.

Another accepted etymology points to the Bahharis, one of the tribes of freed slaves known for their trade in hides and skins abroad. Their homeland became known as Bahhar, later altered by foreign tongues into Barsa.

Most modern scholars agree the truth likely lies somewhere between the two theories: the name evolved as a fusion of both influences—the foreign appellation reinforced by the tribe's prominence—until Barsa became the enduring designation of the land.

Flora and Fauna

The natural ecosystem of Barsa is a testament to resilience, completely shaped by the long-term desertification of the region. While, as mentioned before, ancient fossil records prove the land was once lush and green, the modern wildlife and plant life have evolved specialized adaptations to survive the blistering heat of the day and the freezing temperatures of the desert nights.

Domesticated and wild animals in Barsa are the literal lifeblood of in land trade and travel, acting as the primary means to bridge the vast distances between taifas.

Geography

Barsa, as noted, is a vast region stretching from its westernmost tip on the shores of the Great Sea, across the coasts washed by the Sea of Opir and the Hourglass Sea, to its eastern edge where lies the inland body known as the Red Sea and the

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fabled city of [Zerzura](#). Its eastern coasts, meanwhile, are bordered by the Sea of Division.

To the west, Barsa is separated from Nilfgaard by the Ardawanne Mountains, while to the south it is divided from Hannu by a narrow channel known as the Prouti Strait.

The region is also home to the longest mountain chain on the Old Continent: the Barraye Mountains (Barsameni Common: *Shield Mountains*). These run the length of Barsa, forming the natural border with the Korath Desert and extending as far as Oponsk—separated from Barsa by the so-called Crack Canyon—beyond the region’s limits. In theory, this range might have allowed Barsa to recover its lost verdancy, but its peaks are not high enough to capture and retain rainclouds.

One notable break in the chain is the Suchak Pass, where the now-vanished river of the same name once flowed from its valley southward before drying up.

To the southeast, another great chain, the Istama Mountains (Barsameni Common: *Mountains of Steel*), separates Barsa from Melukka. Together with the Barraye range and surrounding desert hills, they form a basin known as the Cauldron: the most humid yet also one of the hottest areas of the region.

From the eastern Sea of Division, a traveler could, with relative ease, reach [Zerrikania](#) by sailing to the coasts of the Dragon Sea—or, as some maps call it, the Dragon’s Tooth Sea.

Topographically, Barsa is defined by high but arid mountains—too low to capture sufficient rain clouds—which gradually descend into rugged hills and, eventually, broad plains. These landscapes have been shaped by the twin forces of long desertification and centuries of relentless wind erosion.

Monsters

The ecological reality of Barsa, shaped by millennia of relentless desertification and the cataclysms of the different Conjunctions of the Spheres, has given rise to monsters as deadly as the climate itself. However, it must be stated, that in the collective mind of the Barsameni, there is a blurred line between monsters and non-human races; both are frequently branded under the religious label of shayatinun (devils or demons). Due to the complete absence of formal witcher schools within the

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heart of Barsa, dealing with these threats falls entirely upon the warrior-priests known as the Hami al-Aqida, who hunt them using a blend of martial prowess and intentional miracles as mentioned early on.

Some of the most notables are the sila, a type of necrophage, the qutrub, a type of wraith loosely related to the desert banshee and the almiraj, a type of hybrid somewhat similar in appearance to the [caerbannog](#).

Naming

Barsamen names generally follow a fixed structure: [First Name (and sometimes a second name)] + Hen (raised by) + [Family name, tutor's name, or occupational title]. In the case of professions or family names, the prefix Al- (the) is added.

Examples:

- Tadrus Hen Lohsa → Tadrus, raised by Lohsa.
- Zain Hen Al-Attar → Zain, raised by the perfumer.

The use of Hen has its origins in the Barsamen's history of slavery under the Aen Nílfe. In those times, Hen marked the enslaved by indicating the name of their master or overseer—literally who had “*raised*” or “*brought them up*.” After emancipation, the formula was reinterpreted, becoming a marker of lineage and mentorship.

In cases where someone was raised under a particular trade, their name effectively serves as a kind of living curriculum vitae, implicitly indicating their skills and background without the need for explanation.

When multiple tutors, families, or professions were involved in a person's upbringing, the conjunctions wa (and), aydan (also), and bijanib (besides) are used sequentially. In extended names, the order reflects the weight of influence: the earliest and most significant figures appear first, while later or lesser influences are added toward the end. Thus, a Barsamen name may expand to list two, three, or more formative influences—though in practice they rarely extend beyond that third marker.

Extended Example:

- Faiz Hen Al-Elharar Wa Chadi Aydan Al-Haddad Bijanib Jawahir → Faiz,

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raised by the liberators and Chadi, also the blacksmith, besides Jawahir.

Examples of Barsamen Names

Aashna, Abdal, Abgar, Abellinut, Aberkan, Abhau, Ablal, Abudrar, Achshiyarshu, Addai, Adoreil, Agellid, Agerzam, Ahar, Ahuskay, Akktab, Amtabe, Anouer, Awishai, Azzay, Bainia, Bardaisan, Bayan, Bhira, Bihdad, Bilgamish, Br-Hiia, Broneil, Bulbul, Bulfaraz, Daliluessu, Dahsynn, Daimur, Daweska, Dawil, Drobarr, Ekade, Elharar, Enlil, Erra, Faiz, Febo, Ganni, Gewargis, Gorbat, Haddad, Hassanir, Hurmizdukt, Huzālu, Laro, Lemar, Llosa, Mahan, Maimun, Manduiia, Moses, Nadul, Naum, Ninos, Nşab, Ram, Ram-Şilai, Ramuia, Sabur, Saiwia, Sam Pailiş, Sennacherib, Shoyru, Sku-Yawar, Sukhiia, Şabur, Şad-Manda, Şitlan, Tadrus, Ufrin, Yahia, Yuhana, Zakia, Zajirr, Zangia, Zannor, Zanzīru, Zazai, Zazahn, Zhan, Zihrun, Zoarkir, ZoheİR, Zoubair, Zouhaier.

Example of Barsawoman Names

Abnātu, Adaguppi, Ahāssunu, Amirta, Amirto, Anat-Hiia, Anhar, Ator, Awigal, Ayana, Bana, Batishwa, Bibia, Bişam, Bredil, Brula, Buran, Daia, Dihgan, Dinartia, Dmut-Hiia, Dukta, Dwura, Elishwa, Farida, Fawzia, Feleknaş, Haiuna, Handa, Hawa, Hedo, Imama, Istir, Jawahir, Kaizari'il, Katuna, Khawa, Kisna, Kumraitā, Lamiya, Loraida, Mahnuş, Maliha, Mamuia, Mamania, Manu-Qinta, Marganita, Mdinat, Meyana, Mhrizad, Mudalal, Murwaria, Murwarid, Naghma, Nareen, Nargis, Pašta, Paiwia, Qinta, Rhima, Rhimat-Hiia, Ruhmaita-Hiia, Samra, Simat, Simat-Hiia, Sindaita, Suta, Şadia, Şahmia, Şarat, Şkinta, Vian, Wansa, Yasmin, Zadia, 'Qaimat.

Examples of Barsameni Names

Almas, Amal, Atiya, Badr, Bakht, Dana, Duha, Esmat, Farah, Fida, Ghufra, Gulfra, Hikmat, Ikraam, Ilham, Inam, 'Ismat, Jawahir, Jawdat, Jihad, Jlnan, Karam, Khayrat, Loule, Malak, Maram, Menrit, Mumtaz, Naseem, Nasim, Nassim, Nima, Noor, Nour, Nur, Qamar, Rabi 'a, Rabia, Rahat, Rayan, Rayane, Rayyane, Rayyan, Sabah, Safa, Safaa, Safaa ', Salama, Shafaqat, Shams, Tabassum, Tanoute, Taj, Wesam, Wisam, Wissam, Zayaan, Zayan.

Natural Resources

The unforgiving geography of Barsa has deeply conditioned the distribution and value of its natural resources. In a region dominated by long-term desertification and political fragmentation, resources are not merely assets of trade, but the very foundations of state survival, deeply intertwined with religious dogmas, geopolitical rivalries, and strict state oversight.

Mineral Resources

Despite the surface aridity, the ancient subterranean structures of Barsa are remarkably rich in metals and precious stones, which constitute the backbone of the region's heavy industry and its second most important export after slavery.

The Barraye Mountains host the largest deposits of iron and tin in the region. Due to the lack of high peaks to retain rainclouds, mining operations in these high, arid slopes are logistically brutal, relying heavily on slave labor. The raw ore extracted here is vital for the weaponsmiths of the Western and Central taifas, who maintain a constant demand due to recurring border skirmishes.

To the southeast, the Istama Mountains are famous for producing a high-grade quasiron ore with unique chemical properties known as istamanium, often used by the Eastern taifas to forge weapons that compete directly with Melukkan metallurgy.

Deep within the mountain recesses and ancient dried riverbeds, rich veins of gold and lapis lazuli are fiercely contested. Lapis, in particular, holds immense religious significance across many taifas, used extensively in the decoration of theological temples, the garments of high-ranking priests, and the blank reverses of regional currencies to signify divine purity.

Salt

Quarried from both the vast desert salt flats (*sabkhas*) left behind by the drying of the ancient lakes and coastal deposits along the Sea of Opir, salt is a cornerstone of Barsamen domestic and international trade. Beyond its obvious pragmatic use for food preservation in a scorching climate, salt carries immense social and ritual weight. In the standard theocracies and theokritecracies alike, it is used in funerary customs to purify bodies before cremation, and as a currency substitute in the most remote desert outposts where regional coins rarely circulate.

Water

Water is obtained mainly from two sources deep aquifers and desalination, using a giant alembic, where salt is separated from water through evaporation. The vapor is then condensed by cooling as it travels through a tube into a receiving container.

Due to the critical importance of water in the region, water production carries significant social weight and it is considered a highly prestigious profession

Despite having a centralized economic system—though more liberal than in Mahakam, as private property exists under flexible state oversight as mentioned earlier—water producers hold considerable influence. In some taifas, such as Sadat, they are even capable of forming pressure groups, largely because many professions are organized into cooperatives.

Political Organization

The region of Barsa is divided into multiple small states of often similar nature, yet—ironically—often in conflict with one another.

At a broader geopolitical level, the region is divided into three key subregions Western Barsa, Central Barsa and Eastern Barsa. The latter is sometimes incorrectly referred to simply as “*Barsa*” by many.

International Relations

Due to the vastness of the region, the challenges it presents for life, and its historical development, Barsa’s main international relations with countries outside the region are conducted almost exclusively through trade.

All other diplomatic and political interactions are primarily focused on neighboring states within the region or more distant countries that are still part of Barsa itself.

Government

The vast region of Barsa is mostly divided into numerous small states known as taifas (Barsameni Common: *bands or factions*).

These polities are overwhelmingly theocratic in nature, governed by religious authorities whose titles vary from state to state. Among the most common are

Hakimun (*Judge/Ruler*) Almurshidun (*Guides*), Alwasiun (*Custodians*), and Huraasun (*Wardens*), though many other titles exist, reflecting local traditions and dialectal differences. Each taifa confers its leader with distinct honorifics, but all share the unifying element of religious legitimacy.

The forms of government within the taifas vary widely, ranging from semi-democratic councils of spiritual leaders holding different high-ranking titles to outright absolutist monarchies cloaked in sacred authority. The common denominator is always religiosity, with power justified through devotion to divine law.

Most taifas are small in both size and population, their limits dictated by the harsh conditions of desert life and the constant conflicts that perpetually redraw their borders. The majority are concentrated in the fertile pockets that escaped Barsa's ancient desertification or along the coasts, where agriculture and trade are sustainable.

The most powerful taifas arose in the northern frontier zone adjoining Nilfgaard, where the climate is more temperate and resources more abundant. Chief among these was Baccalà (Barsamen Common: *Bukhala*), whose capital lay on the coast and which maintained access to the sea—an asset that made it both wealthy and strategically desirable. It was this taifa, among others, that Nilfgaard eventually conquered, integrating its territory into the expanding southern frontier of the then-republic, later empire.

Exceptions to this pattern did exist. One of the most famous was Bahagrã, a taifa established deep within the desert itself. Though lacking in arable land or reliable water, it endured through mastery of caravan trade routes and, to some extent, through religious authority within its sphere of influence. It proved that in Barsa, political survival could be won as much through faith and commerce as through geography.

If the stories brought back by Nordling sailors are to be believed, it was only destroyed because a thief ascended to the throne by marrying the local naïve princess while impersonating a nobleman from afar.

Forms of Government

Almost all the countries of Barsa (though there are exceptions—few, but they do exist), despite their vast differences from one another, share one common characteristic: they are all some form of theocracy. From jalīfayns and jaliphates

to a standard theocracy, including forms such as theoplutocracies (wealth and religion), theogerontocracies (elders and religion), theoaristocracies, and theodemocracies, to more striking forms such as theomonarchies, in which a monarch is chosen not by bloodline but for being the most devout believer; theokritecracies, in which laws form the basis for religion rather than the other way around, as in a standard theocracy; and a long list of even more curious forms. Some even combine the forms already mentioned into new ones.

Geopolitical Influence

During the periods in which the region of Barsa was unified (first under elven rule and later under human rule), its influence extended both near and far.

To the near, it reached as far as Ofir, where by the 4th century, as mentioned earlier, refugees fleeing the enslavement imposed by the Aen Nílfe elves founded the Sultanate of Badyah.

To the far, during the era of human rule—prior to the fragmentation into taifas—its influence reached as far as the [Sundalaic Islands](#) in the Far East. There, it left such a strong cultural imprint that the islands' government eventually became a sultanate.

Even after the division into taifas, Barsa's influence persisted at long distances.

It reached as far as the island of [Mekan](#), located to the west, which came under the control of the taifa of Bukhala before both the taifa and the island were eventually conquered by the Nilfgaardian Empire.

Non-humans

The situation of non-humans in Barsa, though varying somewhat between taifas, shares a common denominator: it is dire—worse, in fact, than in the Northern Realms. Barsamen societies often labels them as mentioned before as *shayatinun* (*devils or demons*), a reflection of deep-rooted hostility and suspicion.

Barsa itself is a harsh land, and beyond those who once dwelt there in ancient times, few non-humans remain today—or at least, few are known. Surviving elves fled into the Korath desert long ago, while other races that once lived under Aen Nílfe dominion (gnomes, dwarves, goblinoids) were eventually exterminated by humans, driven by fear that these peoples might once again enslave them.

Still, scattered remnants of non-human populations are reported. Eremeads, desert nymphs said to wander the land. Qaliyaun, strange humanoids with donkey-like features of unknown origin, perhaps survivors of another enslaved race of the Aen Nílfe. Sheikun, an antherion-like species resembling frogs. Ghaddarun, ogroid raiders who stalk caravan routes, thought to be another remnant of once-enslaved races. Nasnasun, mysterious half-human beings believed to be a form of [dhampir](#). If true, their existence implies that [supreme vampires](#) are present in Barsa as well. Lilituns, a strigiform species probably distantly related to the [korreds](#). Along the coasts, merpeople and the oannun, a fish-like race, are also said to dwell.

In the east, near the border with southern Bia Thin, the [dyrians](#)—a collective of races resembling humans but marked by varying animal features—maintain a small but notable presence.

The subterranean depths of Barsa are also said to harbor the svergs, an ancient race resembling a mixture of elves and gnomes, though their existence is shrouded in myth and scattered reports rather than confirmed evidence.

Such groups remain marginal, often hunted or forced into the most inhospitable regions. To most Barsamen, they are remembered not as neighbors but as living echoes of enslavement—demons to be reviled or destroyed, akin to the monsters brought by the Conjunctions.

It is also possible that, in those remote areas, other surviving races forgotten to Barsamen collective memory persist in hiding, avoiding humans out of fear of annihilation.

Witchers

Although the situation for non-humans in Barsa is generally much worse than in the Northern Kingdoms, this is not the case for [witchers](#).

In the areas of Barsa where they have been present—mainly Western Barsa—they could be considered an exception that proves the rule. This is largely due to their profession.

Their reputation is owed in great part to the witchers of the [School of the Manticore](#), who protected Zerrikanian caravans traveling through the region and, somewhat ironically, also in part to the witchers of the [School of the Cat](#), who are known to have passed through the area with their mobile school, the [Dyn Marv](#)

[caravan](#), serving as ideal assassins in the countless conflicts between the various taifas.

Notable Locations

For a complete list of Barsa locations, see: Category: Barsa locations

Basins

- The Cauldron

Canyons

- Crack Canyon

Cities

- Baytamn: The capital of the Protectorate of Kigrun.
- Bukhala (city) [formerly]

Fortresses

- Darn Mekan (formerly)
- Kalaat Al-Hadid: A massive fortress originally built by a coalition between the taifas of Ahaggar and Aussa to fend off expansionist incursions from Khodû and Dukkar, it now stands as a heavily militarized checkpoint between Eastern Barsa and the Melukkan borders.

Islands

- Jazirat al-Milh: Positioned near the Sea of Division, this island acts as a neutral trading hub where Ofieri, Melukkan, and Barsameni merchants exchange goods away from the strict taxes and religious laws of the mainland taifas.
- [Mekan](#) (formerly)

Inland Seas

- Red Sea

Mountains

- Barraye Mountains
- Istama Mountains

Passes

- Suchak Pass

Ruins

- [Darizag](#)

Straits

- Prouti Strait

Notable Taifas

For a complete list of Barsameni Taifas, see: [Category: Barsameni Taifas](#)

Western Barsa

Kingdoms

- Bahhar
- Eńokch

Theocracies

- Bukhala [extinct] (with its capital being present-day [Baccalà](#))
- Garănat

Theogerontocracies

- Byara
- Natser

Theokritecracies

- Alfūj [extinct]
- Shamsī

Theomeritocracies

- Darfur
- Kunar

Central Barsa

Kingdoms

- Bahagrā [extinct] (according to tales)

Partitheocracies

- Makhir
- Sadat

Theodemocracies

- Blakunī

Theoanocracies

- Tarim
- Utetera

Protectorates

- Kigrun (Visalian)

Eastern Barsa

Theocracies

- Zaia (gözet)

Theomonarchies

- Gatrāza
- Ja'far (gözet)

Theoplutocracies

- Ahaggar
- Aussa

Non-taifas

City-states

- [Zerzura](#)

Outside of Barsa

Theocracies

- [Ruach](#)

Notable Ethnic Groups

For a complete list of Barsameni Ethnic Groups, see: [Category: Barsameni Ethnic Groups](#)

- Bahharis
- Grivon
- Mukhtalitun
- Ruache People
- Rhunai
- Yebouru

Notable Factions

For a complete list of Barsameni factions, see: [Category: Barsameni factions](#)

- Muqaṭṭirū al-baḥr (*Distillers of the Sea*): One of the most important professions across many taifas—especially coastal ones. They hold enough power to act as pressure groups within the higher spheres of power, largely due to their organization into cooperatives, as previously mentioned. Despite the variety of languages across Barsa, their name tends to remain remarkably consistent. This is because it originates from a shared language family, the

terms remain relatively similar across different languages. This is especially noticeable in regions where mutual intelligibility reaches around 45%. One of the most well-known groups is that of Sadat, as previously mentioned.

- Nizām al-Nizām (*Order of Order* or *System of the System*, depending on the taifa): An order of female assassins dedicated to maintaining the status quo of the region in order to eventually achieve a lasting peace.
- Nizām al-Fawḍā (*Order of Disorder/Chaos/Anarchy*, depending on the taifa): An order of Furūsiyya (the Barsameni equivalent of a knightly order), composed exclusively of men, devoted—true to its name—to spreading chaos throughout the region. They believe that only through chaos will a great figure arise capable of uniting Barsa once more, bringing with it the long-desired peace—and perhaps even leading the region into a new age of glory.

Notable People

For the full list of known Barsameni, see Category:Barsameni

Criminals

- Zain Hen Al-Attar: The supposed destroyer of the taifa of Bahagrā.

Corsairs

- Fawzia Hen Al-Bahhari: A notorious and ruthless corsair mainly operating across the Sea of Opir and the south of the Great Sea.

Explorers

- Faiz Hen Al-Elharar Wa Chadi Aydan Al-Haddad Bijanib Jawahir: A famous explorer from the taifa of Zaia who discovered the Sundalaic Islands.

Mages

- **Tadrus Hen Lohsa**: Resident mage of the city of Hengfors and an advisor to the rulers of the East March and the Hengfors League.

Scholars

- Abdal Hen Al-Sabbah: A legendary cartographer from Eastern Barsa who

served as the primary local guide for Fabio Sachs' expedition in 1283 A.R.

- Awishai Hen Daliluessu: A bold cartographer from the central partitheocracy of Sadat. He became famous across the region after successfully mapping the perilous, dried-up Suchak Pass and the scorching basin known as the Cauldron.

Pirates

- Kisna Hen Khawa: One of the first rulers of the Pirate Taifas Era of Barsa.

Image Credits

- *Sila* by Keenan Coughlin

Notes

Although the region has been expanded far beyond its original mention in *The Sword of Destiny*—where it was only briefly referenced—and now primarily functions as an analogue to the Arab world within The Witcher setting, it also incorporates other, less commonly represented Middle Eastern influences not present in Ofir or other parts of the Far South. This approach is grounded in the core philosophy of The Witcher (subverting clichés), The real-world complexity of the region, and historical parallels such as the Taifa period in Spain, where although the region was predominantly Muslim, Christians and Jews also coexisted within these states.

Trivia

- Taifas were independent Muslim principalities and kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula, eventually absorbed by Catholic monarchies during the Reconquista.
- Ahaggar is a reference both to the mountain range of the same name located in Algeria and to the Tuareg confederation of **Kel Ahaggar**^[W], which existed until 1977.
- Zaia is a reference to the **Zaian Confederation**^[W], a confederation of Berber tribesmen in the interior of Morocco, which resisted French conquest in the Middle Atlas mountains for several years.

- Darfur is a reference to the [Sultanate of Darfur^{\[W\]}](#), a precolonial state and later an Anglo-Egyptian condominium that existed in Sudan.
- Makhir is a reference to [Maakhir^{\[W\]}](#), a quasi-state that existed in the Sanaag region in eastern Somalia.
- Sadat is a reference to [Sadat^{\[W\]}](#), a suffix given to families believed to be descendants of the Islamic prophet Muhammad.
- Aussa is a reference to the [Sultanate of Aussa^{\[W\]}](#), a kingdom that existed in eastern Ethiopia between the 18th and 20th centuries.
- [Zerzura^{\[W\]}](#) is a reference to the legendary city of the same name.
- Utetera is a reference to the [Tippu Tip's state^{\[W\]}](#), an Arab sultanate established in East Africa.
- Tarim is a reference to both the [Sultanate of Tarim^{\[W\]}](#), located in Yemen, and to the city and district of the same name, also located in Yemen.
- Kunar is a reference to the [Islamic Emirate of Kunar^{\[W\]}](#), a quasi-state established in 1991 in the Kunar Province, Afghanistan. It also refers to a valley and a river located in the same country.
- Byara is a reference to the [Islamic Emirate of Byara^{\[W\]}](#), a short-lived unrecognized Kurdish Islamic state ruled by Sharia law, which declared independence from Iraq in 2001 and ended in 2003. It also serves as a reference/explanation to Dandelion's words about "*a Barsan custom demanding that all girls guard their virginity until they wed*".
- Gatrāza refers to the Emirate of Granada, the last taifa to exist on the Iberian Peninsula.
- The Nizām al-Nizām and Nizām al-Fawḍā are a dark parody—very much in the typical tone of the saga—of the Assassins and Templars from the Assassin's Creed series. They also reference:
 - The easter egg in *The Witcher 2: Assassins of Kings* where Altair is found dead after performing a Leap of Faith in the prologue.
 - A subversion of the classic Assassin's Creed dynamic of "*good Assassins vs evil Templars*", portraying both factions as morally grey.
- Theokritecracy derives from Ancient Greek. Theo (god), krite (judge, arbiter) and cracy (power, rule, governance). Thus meaning, divine power of the judge, divine authority of the arbiter or rule governed by divine judgment.
- The word jalifa derives from Classical Arabic *ḫalīfa* (خَلِيفَة), meaning "successor," "delegate," or "lieutenant." The suffix -ayn is used to indicate

duality, and therefore a jalifayn refers to a diarchic caliphate—a system with two rulers. The term jalifate is used instead of “*caliphate*” to respect the original linguistic form and provide a more distinctive cultural flavor to the region.

- The difference between a jalifate and a theomonarchy is relatively straightforward. In a jalifate, the successor is either of bloodline or appointed, always belongs to the upper social or political elite and mirrors real historical caliphates in structure. In a theomonarchy, the ruler is chosen as the most devout individual, origin does not matter (noble or not) and the clergy acts as a regulatory and selecting body, but does not directly govern.
- The idea of the Barsameni Common being a family of languages disguised as a single common tongue is a reference to modern Arabic. In reality, among some countries, the so-called “*dialects*” are no longer mutually intelligible. For example, within the non-peninsula varieties, the largest difference is between the non-Egyptian North African dialects, especially Moroccan Arabic, and the others. Moroccan Arabic in particular is hardly comprehensible to Arabic speakers east of Libya (although the converse is not true, in part due to the popularity of Egyptian films and other media).
- The concept of a psychology deeply tied to religion is intended as a positive subversion.
 - Not only of clichés associated with the real-world region that inspired Barsa, but more importantly, of the idea of psychologists or psychiatrists forming harmful religious sects.
- Some of the real life inspiration are: Yazidis, Druze, Khafaja, Chaush, Hutaym, Gilak, Assyrian, Mandaean, Pashtuns and more.
- Most of Barsa’s non-human races are inspired by creatures from Arabic folklore, with the exception of the eremeads, an original creation, the dyrians, a creation of Adalwulf of Aedirn and the lilituns. As their name implies, lilituns are based on the lilins, hostile night spirits from Mesopotamian and Jewish mythology. Their concept also draws on Judit M. Blair’s thesis regarding the Akkadian word *lilu* and its cognates, which she connects to the Hebrew *lilith* in Isaiah 34:14—interpreted by some scholars as a night bird. This etymological link explains why lilituns are conceptualized as strigiforms, envisioned as owl-like monsters of human size, and hence why they are portrayed as distant kin to the korreds.
- The treatment of non-humans in Barsa serves as an analogy to the

persecution of minority ethnic groups in the historical Middle East—paralleling how non-humans are used in The Witcher books to explore themes of racism, discrimination, and colonialism.

- The dynamic between the Golden Empire, its collapse, and the rise of the taifas is loosely inspired by the Middle Eastern situation after World War I and the unification of the Arabian Peninsula. While the taifas are modeled primarily on their Iberian counterparts, they also echo the later fragmentation of Arabia into emirates such as Qatar and Oman. Similarly, the influence of Melukka on some taifas is an inversion of the historical influence of Islam in India—here portraying the “Indian” analogue as a cultural force acting upon the “*Arab*” analogue.



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